FROM THE WORLD OF FABLEWOOD...

FICTION SQUAD™

NO. 6 OF 6

JENKINS & BACHS & PACIAROTTI

TEN YEARS BOOM! STUDIOS™

FROM THE WORLD OF FABLEWOOD...

FICTION SQUAD™

Written by **Paul Jenkins**

Illustrated by **Ramon Bachs**

Colors by **Leonardo Paciarotti**

Letters by **Jim Campbell**

Cover
Ramon Bachs
Colors by Edgar Delgado

Kickstarter
Exclusive Cover
Michael Dialynas

Character Designs by
Humberto Ramos & Ramon Bachs

Designer
Kara Leopard

Assistant Editor
Alex Galer

Editor
Dafna Pleban

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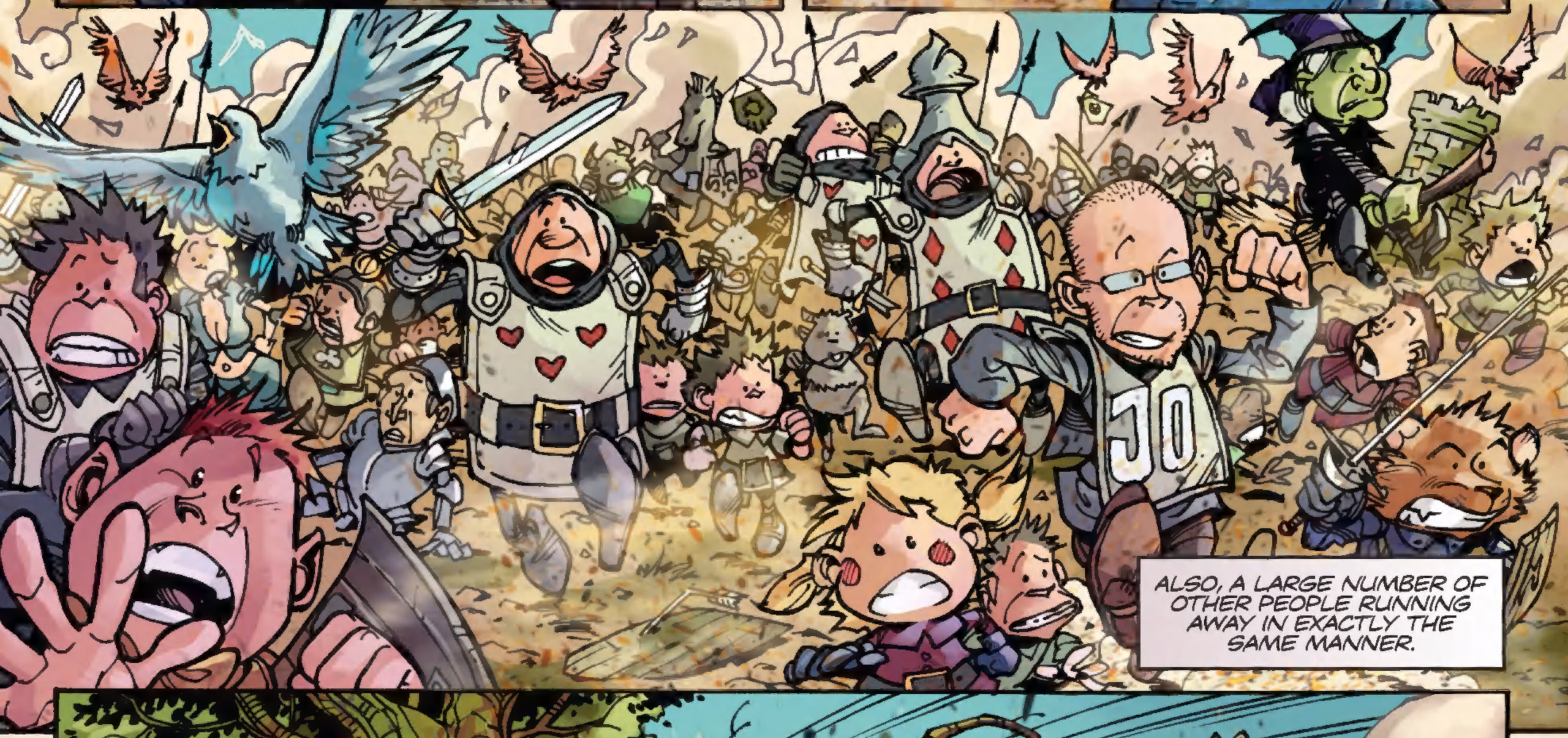
A QUICK RECAP OF OUR STORY SO FAR:
MY NAME IS DETECTIVE FRANKIE MACK. THIS IS ME, RIGHT HERE.

THIS IS MY PARTNER, SIMPLE SIMON. HE IS AN IDIOT.
THIS IS US, RUNNING AWAY.


ALSO, A LARGE NUMBER OF OTHER PEOPLE RUNNING AWAY IN EXACTLY THE SAME MANNER.

THIS IS ONE OF THE THINGS WE ARE RUNNING FROM.

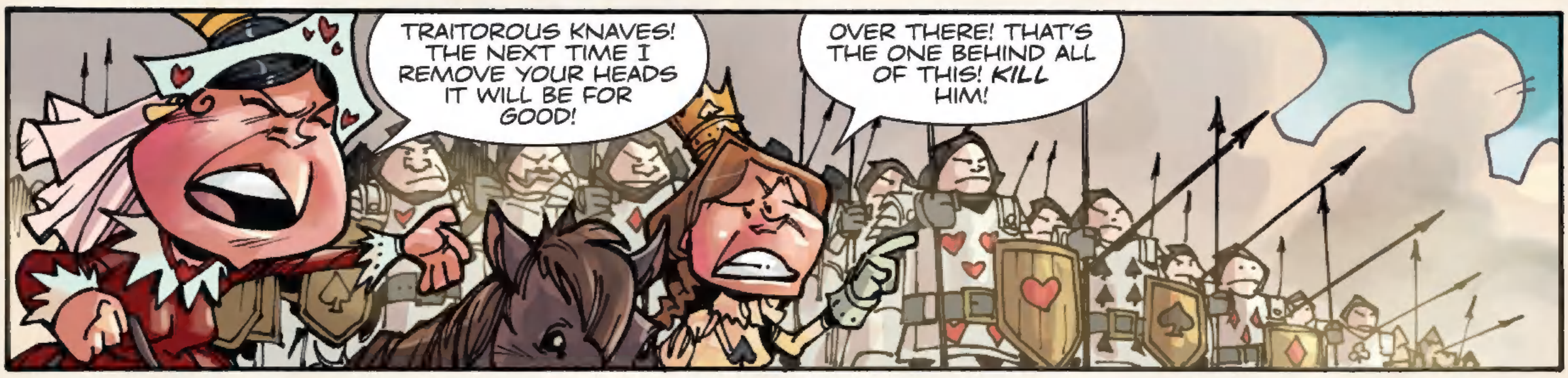
AND THIS IS THE UNDERSTATEMENT OF THE CENTURY.
WELL, I DIDN'T SEE THAT COMING!

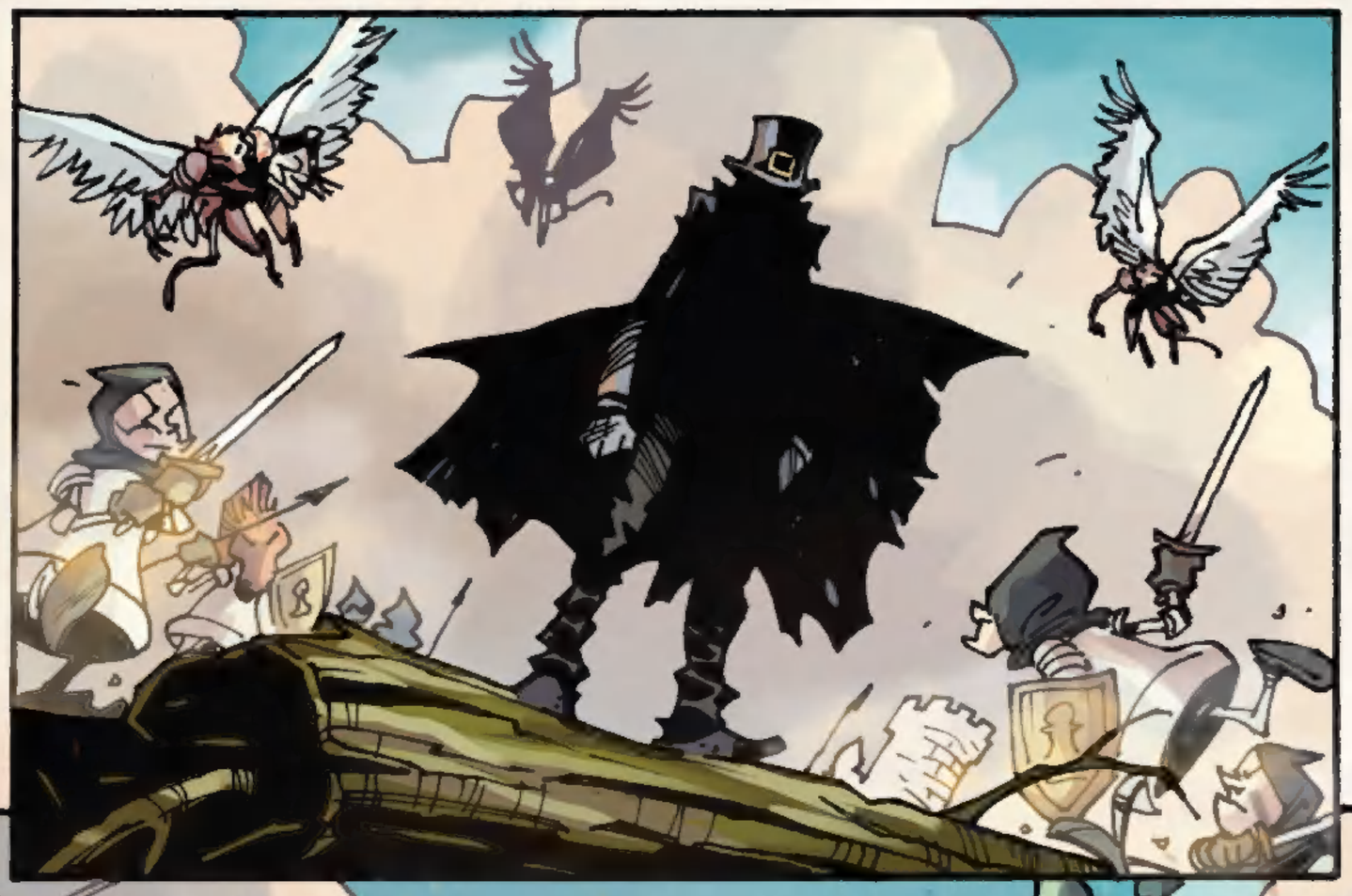
THERE'S JACKS EVERYWHERE! HUNDREDS OF 'EM! WE'VE GOTTA GET TO THE TREE LINE AND REGROUP--

WHICH WAY IS THE TREE LINE?

JUST *RUN*, YOU MORON!

THANKS MARLIE, WATSON... KIM. I OWE YOU GUYS--
NO PROBLEM, FRANKIE--BUT IF WE DON'T DO SOMETHING QUICK, THERE WON'T BE ANYTHING LEFT TO COLLECT.


TRAITOROUS KNAVES! THE NEXT TIME I REMOVE YOUR HEADS IT WILL BE FOR GOOD!
OVER THERE! THAT'S THE ONE BEHIND ALL OF THIS! KILL HIM!



NOW, I THINK...

THOUSANDS OF JACKS, AND FROM EVERY GENRE! MADONNA OF HEARTS, I PROPOSE A TRUCE: WE MUST JOIN FORCES OR BE RUN TO THE GROUND!

AGREED, MY LADY WESTSIDE. LET OUR DIFFERENCES BE PUT ASIDE FOR THE COMMON GOOD--
ARE YOU SERIOUS?

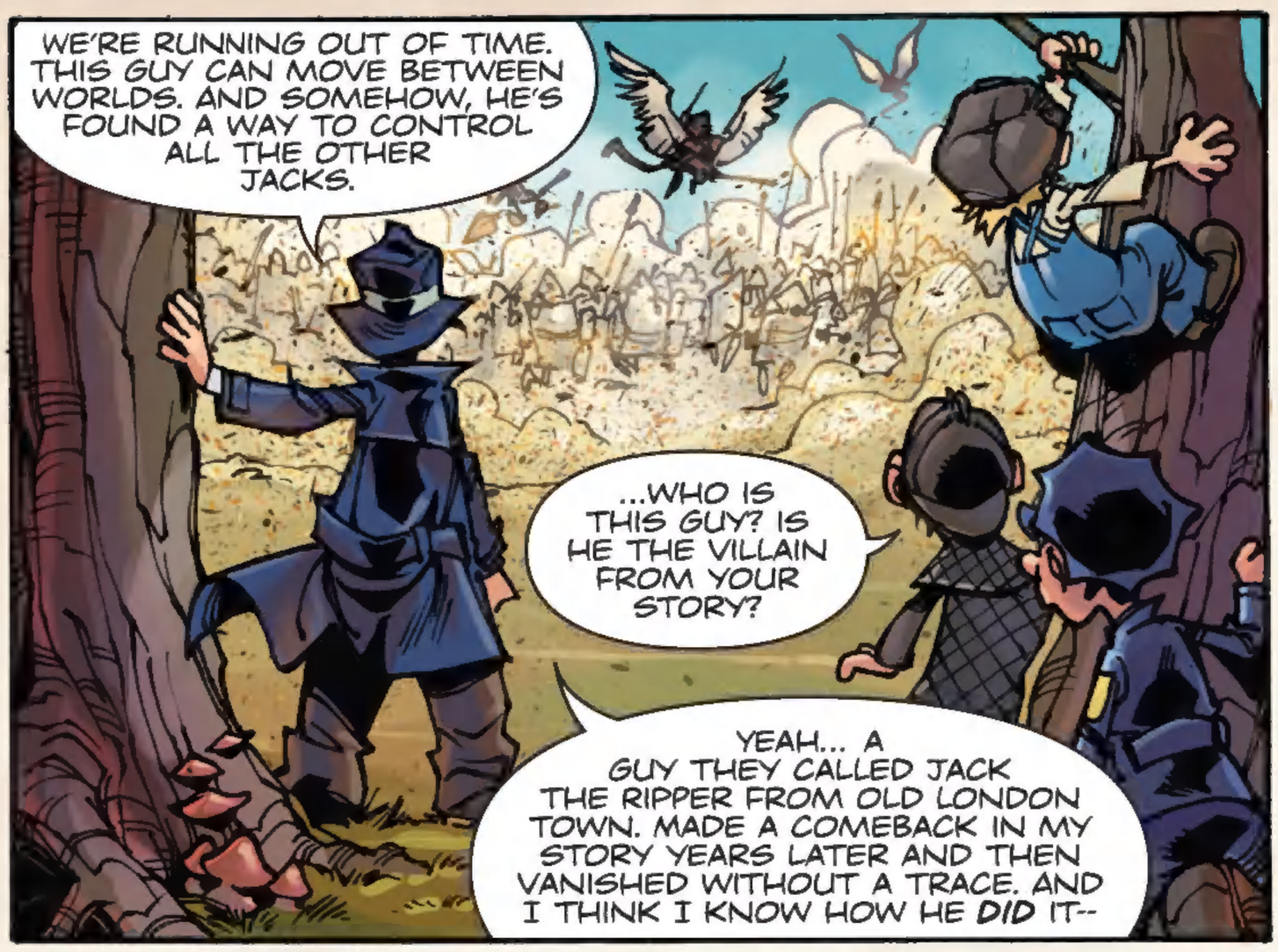
NO CHARACTER OF WONDERLAND HAS EVER ALLIED WITH A CHARACTER OF OZ! THIS IS AN ACT OF TREASON BY ONE OF OUR OWN MADONNAS!
I HEREBY ISSUE A CHALLENGE FOR THE THRONE OF HEARTS--

THAT'S VERY CONVENIENT, TOOTS... I MEAN CONSIDERING YOU'VE BEEN IN CAHOOTS WITH THE REAL JACK ALL ALONG. IF I DIDN'T KNOW BETTER I'D SAY YOUR CHALLENGE WAS ALL A PART OF HIS PLAN.
LIES! DON'T LISTEN TO HIM!

I KNOW THIS GUY--HE'S A STONE COLD KILLER THAT NOBODY EVER DID TRACE. LEGEND ALWAYS HAD IT HE WAS EVERYWHERE, AND NOWHERE AT ALL.
HE OFFERED YOU ALL A DEAL, JUST TO SET YOU AGAINST EACH OTHER. IT'S TOO BAD HE HAS NO INTENTION OF DELIVERING ON HIS PROMISES. YOU'RE ALL JUST TARGETS TO THIS GUY, AND NOW HE'S CONTROLLING ALL THE JACKS.

UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES, WE WILL ALLY WITH THE WHITE QUEEN AND THE WITCHES UNTIL THIS SITUATION IS RESOLVED.
ALICE, I WILL DEAL WITH YOU LATER. THE REST OF YOU...

...CHARGE!


WE'RE RUNNING OUT OF TIME. THIS GUY CAN MOVE BETWEEN WORLDS. AND SOMEHOW, HE'S FOUND A WAY TO CONTROL ALL THE OTHER JACKS.
...WHO IS THIS GUY? IS HE THE VILLAIN FROM YOUR STORY?
YEAH... A GUY THEY CALLED JACK THE RIPPER FROM OLD LONDON TOWN. MADE A COMEBACK IN MY STORY YEARS LATER AND THEN VANISHED WITHOUT A TRACE. AND I THINK I KNOW HOW HE DID IT--

--OVER THERE!

PARTNER, I NEED YOU TO STAY BACK HERE FOR ME, OKAY? I'M GOING TO TRY AN' BRING THIS GUY IN ONCE AN' FOR ALL.
WHAT DO YOU WANT ME TO DO?

I NEED A DISTRACTION. JUST BE YOURSELF--

HEY, EVERYBODY! LET'S SING A WAR SHANTY! ALL TOGETHER NOW!
"BRAVE SHIP'S CAP-TAIN... ON THE SEVEN SEAS..."

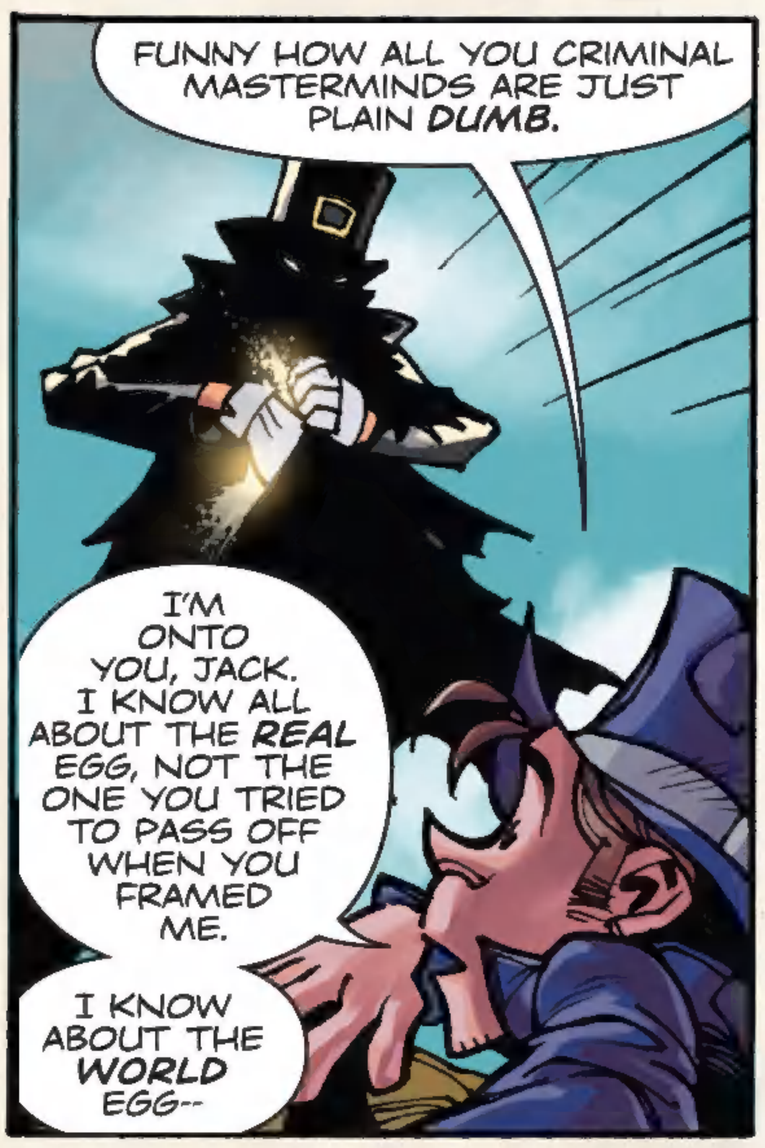
ATTABOY.

WHAT ON EARTH IS THAT FOOL DOING OVER THERE--?

UHHF!

HIYA, JACK! REMEMBER ME?
UHHHR...

AAH!
...RRAGH!


FUNNY HOW ALL YOU CRIMINAL MASTERMINDS ARE JUST PLAIN DUMB.
I'M ONTO YOU, JACK. I KNOW ALL ABOUT THE REAL EGG, NOT THE ONE YOU TRIED TO PASS OFF WHEN YOU FRAMED ME.
I KNOW ABOUT THE WORLD EGG--

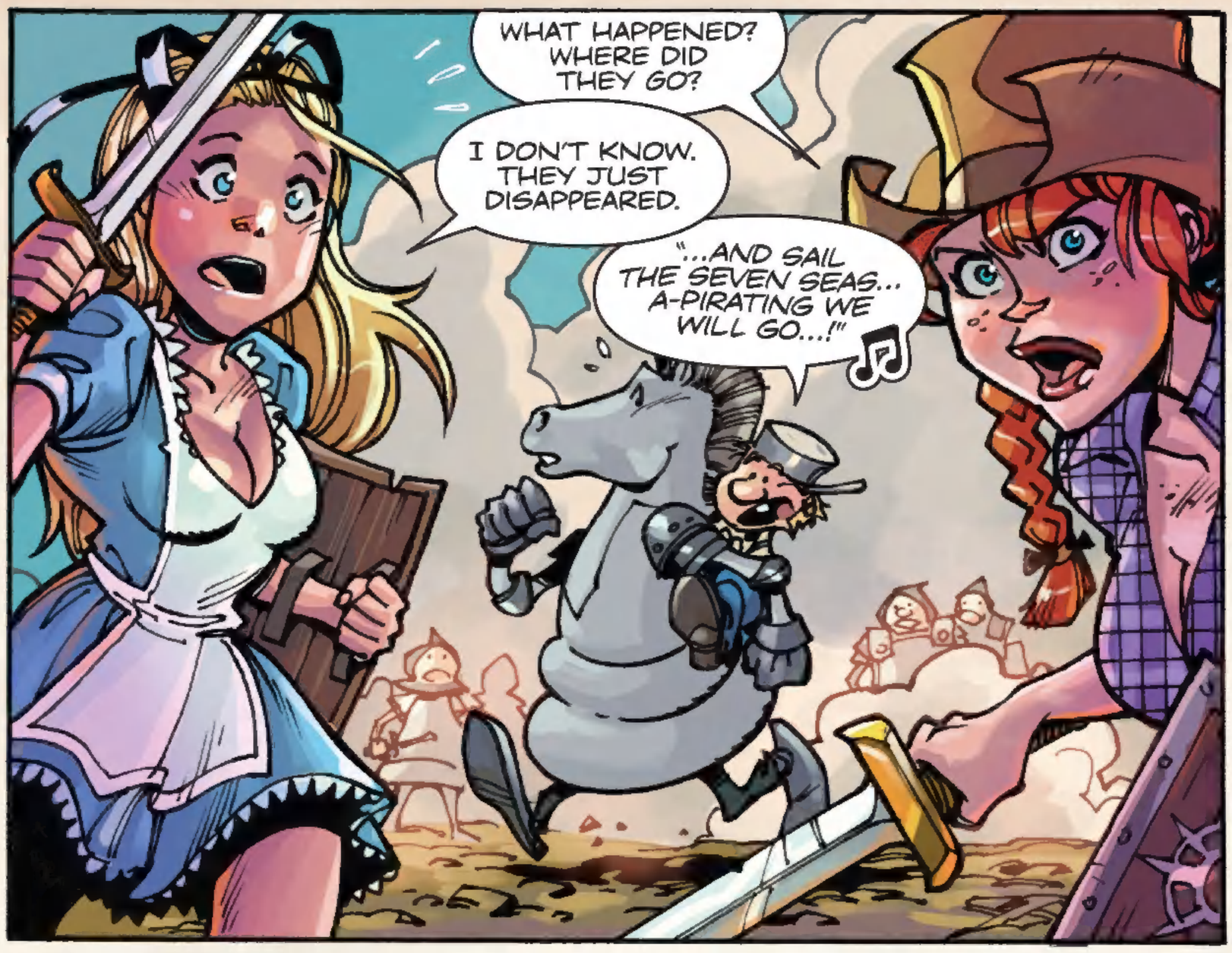
ON THE CONTRARY, DETECTIVE MACK, YOU KNOW NOTHING. YOU KNOW ITS NAME, AND YOU KNOW ITS STORY.
snap

BUT FABLEWOOD HAS NOT BEGUN TO CONCEIVE OF WHAT A MAN SUCH AS I CAN DO WITH SUCH A POWER.
CLUNK

IT DOESN'T MATTER WHAT YOU KNOW. IT DOESN'T EVEN MATTER IF YOU THINK YOU'VE WON. I AM THE ONLY THING THAT MATTERS IN THIS WORLD.
I LIVE IN EVERY CORNER. I AM IN EVERY STORY, ALWAYS IN THE SHADOWS. ALWAYS BEHIND YOU WHEN YOU LEAST EXPECT IT.

BE SEEING YOU, FRANKIE.
klik

POP
POP
POP
POP
POP


WHAT HAPPENED? WHERE DID THEY GO?
I DON'T KNOW. THEY JUST DISAPPEARED.
"...AND SAIL THE SEVEN SEAS... A-PIRATING WE WILL GO...!"

THEY DIDN'T JUST DISAPPEAR--
--SIMON, YOU CAN SHUT UP NOW--
OH. RIGHT, SO.
--JACK'S USING THE WORLD EGG TO RESHAPE EVENTS IN ANY WAY HE WANTS.

IT IS A GOOD THING THAT YOU HAVE DONE, DETECTIVE. A GOOD THING--
WITH RESPECT, YOUR MAJESTY, I DIDN'T DO ANYTHING. THIS GUY CAN REWRITE THE ENTIRE STORYBOOK. HE LEFT BECAUSE HE WANTED TO.

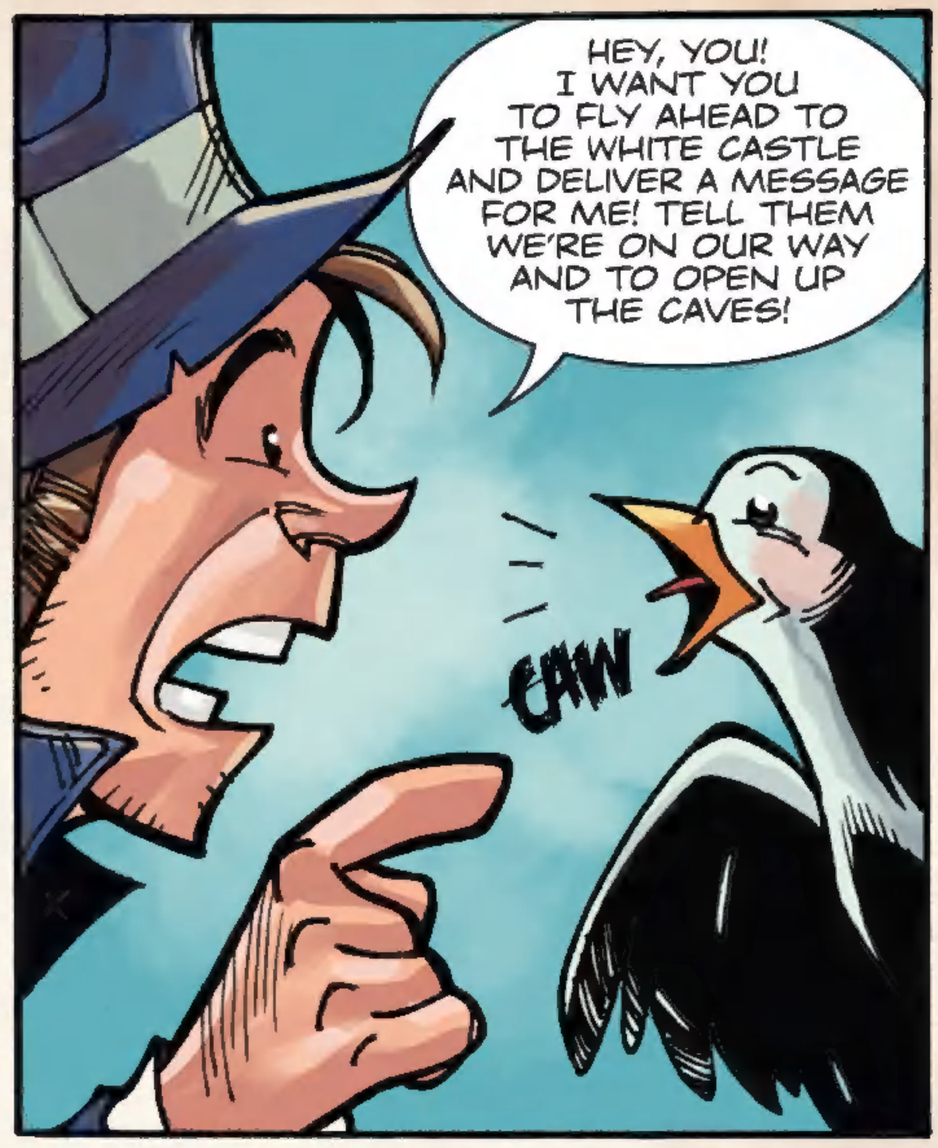
WE'LL HAVE TO ACT FAST. I'VE GOT TO FIND OUT WHERE HE TOOK ALL THE OTHER JACKS--
rrrrrummmmmmmmmbbbbbble

LOOK OUT ABOVE!

KRASH

KRAAAAK

WHAT IS THIS DEVILRY? IS THIS *YOUR* DOING, MADONNA OF HEARTS--?
IT'S COMING FROM UNDERNEATH THE GROUND! YOU LADIES NEED TO TAKE A STEP BACK, CALM DOWN AND LET THE POLICE HANDLE THIS!


HEY, YOU! I WANT YOU TO FLY AHEAD TO THE WHITE CASTLE AND DELIVER A MESSAGE FOR ME! TELL THEM WE'RE ON OUR WAY AND TO OPEN UP THE CAVES!
CAW

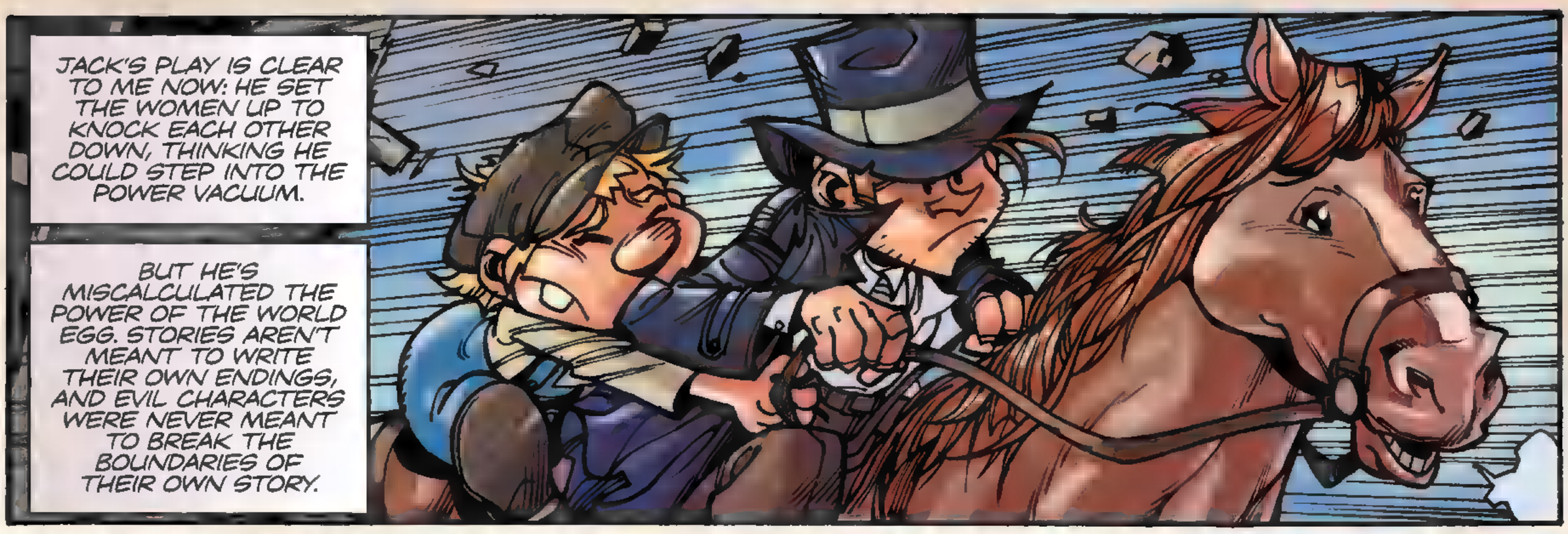
YOU! I NEED YOUR HORSE!
SIMON!

I'M HERE, FRANKIE!
JUMP ON UP! WE'RE GOING TO SEE A MAN ABOUT A DOG!

rrruummmmmbbbble

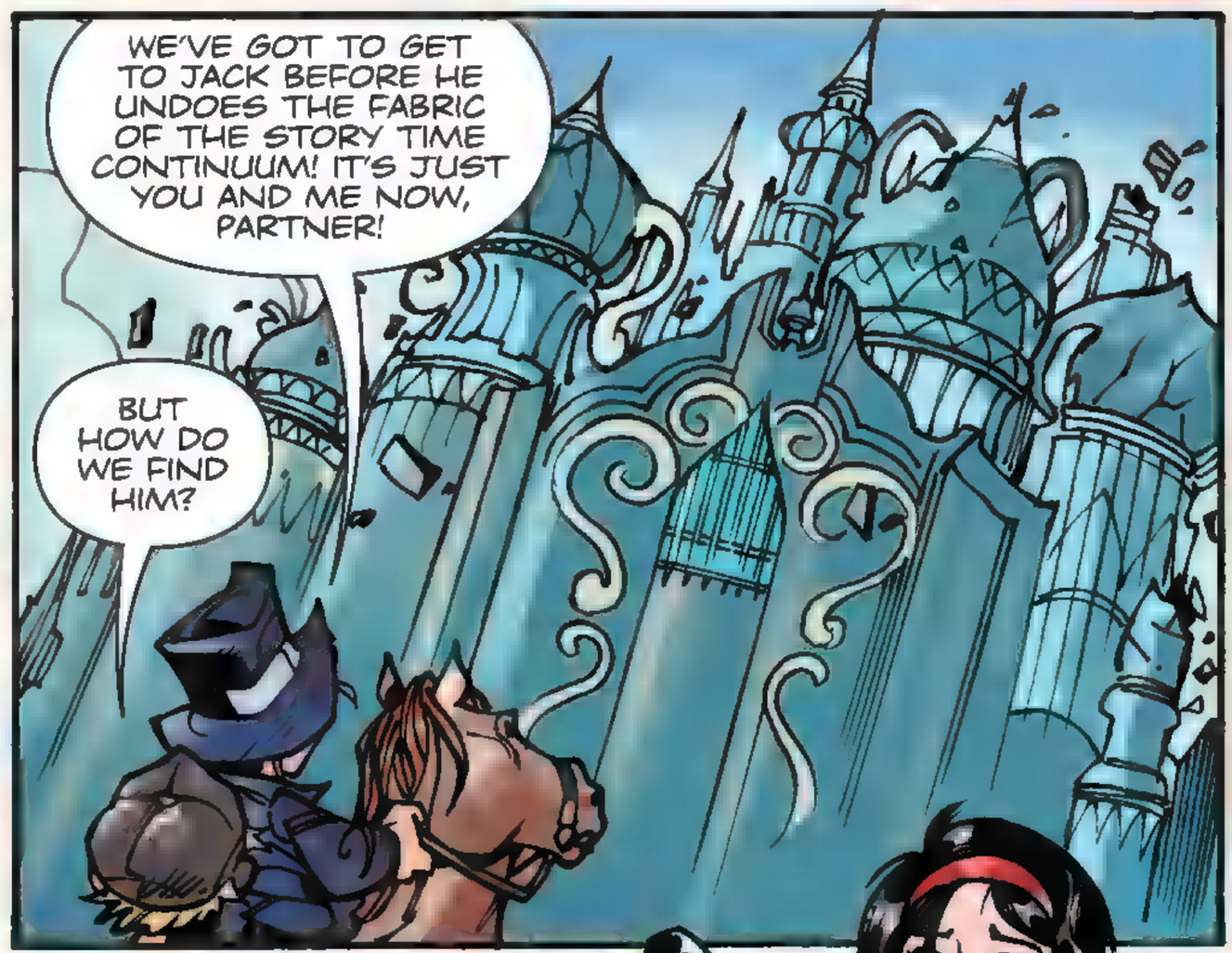
HOLD ON TIGHT! THIS IS GOING TO BE ROUGH!
I'MMMM
TTTRRYYYIIIINNNNG--

rrrrruummmmmmmmmbbbbbbble


JACK'S PLAY IS CLEAR TO ME NOW: HE SET THE WOMEN UP TO KNOCK EACH OTHER DOWN, THINKING HE COULD STEP INTO THE POWER VACUUM.
BUT HE'S MISCALCULATED THE POWER OF THE WORLD EGG. STORIES AREN'T MEANT TO WRITE THEIR OWN ENDINGS, AND EVIL CHARACTERS WERE NEVER MEANT TO BREAK THE BOUNDARIES OF THEIR OWN STORY.

IF I CAN'T FIND HIM QUICKLY, FABLEWOOD IS GOING TO RIP ITSELF APART AT THE SEAMS.

HEY, FRANKIE! I HAVE A STUPID QUESTION! WE'RE NOT GOING TO SEE A MAN ABOUT A DOG, ARE WE?
NOPE!

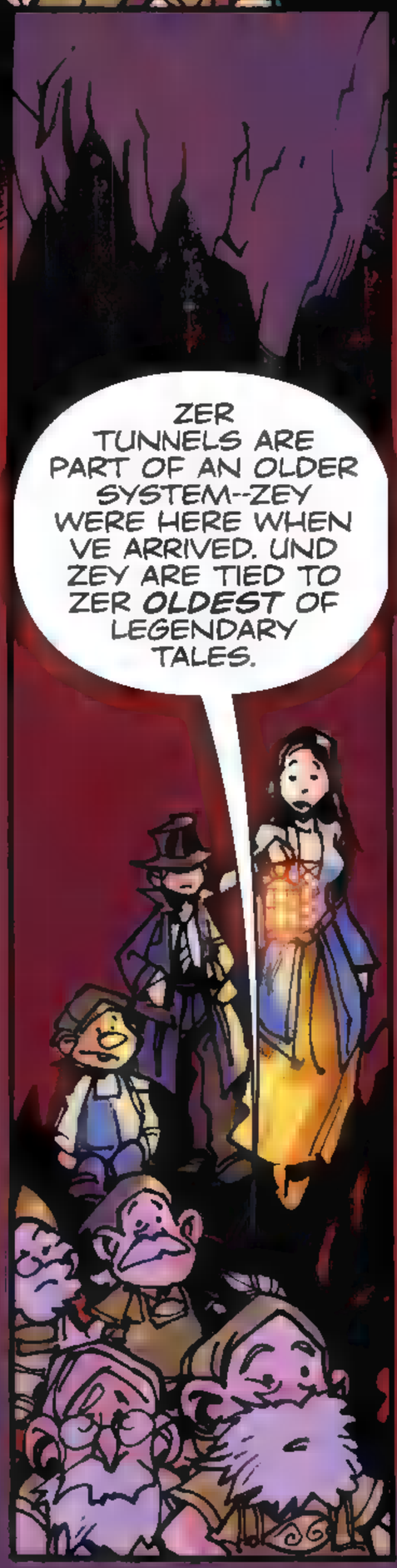

WE'VE GOT TO GET TO JACK BEFORE HE UNDOES THE FABRIC OF THE STORY TIME CONTINUUM! IT'S JUST YOU AND ME NOW, PARTNER!
BUT HOW DO WE FIND HIM?

SIMON, IF IT WERE ANYONE ELSE I'D EXPLAIN! BUT YOU'RE AN IDIOT-- YOU WOULDN'T UNDERSTAND!
FAIR ENOUGH!

WE RECEIVED YOUR MESSAGE MOMENTS AGO, DETECTIVE. IF YOUR THEORIES ARE CORRECT, TIME IS OF THE ESSENCE.
JA! NOW YOU KOMM MIT US TO ZER TUNNELS!
HELP!

HOW CAN YOU BE SURE YOUR QUARRY IS DOWN HERE?
I'M NOT SURE OF ANYTHING, MA'AM. BUT THESE TUNNELS ARE SPREAD ALL ACROSS FABLEWOOD. I THINK THIS IS HOW OUR BOY MANAGES TO GET AROUND.

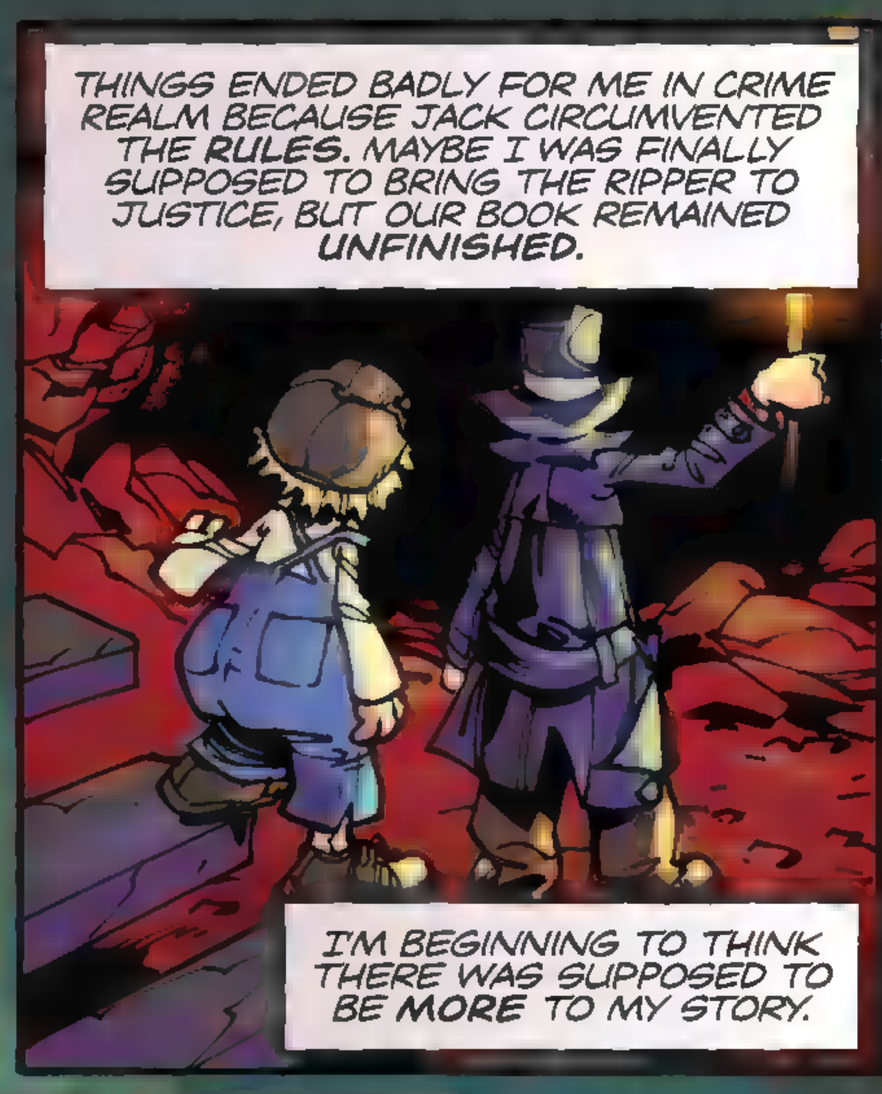
IF HE'S USING THESE TUNNELS, HE DOESN'T HAVE TO CROSS THE GENRE BORDER. HE'S GOTTEN USED TO BREAKING ALL THE RULES--
--HEY, DO THESE TUNNELS GO DOWN ANY FURTHER?


ZER TUNNELS ARE PART OF AN OLDER SYSTEM--ZEY WERE HERE WHEN VE ARRIVED. UND ZEY ARE TIED TO ZER OLDEST OF LEGENDARY TALES.

JA! UND ZER OLDEST TUNNEL IS DOWN HIER UNTER. IT DESCENDS TO ZER CENTER OF ZER VORLD!
HERE. DER "RABBIT HOLE."
DETECTIVE, NONE OF MY DWARVES HAS EVER VENTURED INTO THE RABBIT HOLE--EVEN THEY BELIEVE IT IS TOO DANGEROUS.
IT IS SAID THIS ANCIENT TUNNEL LEADS ALL THE WAY DOWN TO THE MELT.

IF SO, IT IS A ONE-WAY JOURNEY TO CERTAIN DEATH.
WELL, THAT'S A STROKE OF LUCK. THAT'S EXACTLY WHERE WE'RE HEADED. RIGHT, SIMON?
RIGHT, SO!

MAYBE IT'S JUST A HUNCH, OR MAYBE MORE. MAYBE I'M JUST A WASHED UP DETECTIVE FROM A THIRTY-PAGE NOVELLA WHOSE ENTIRE CAREER NEVER AMOUNTED TO A HILL OF BEANS...
...BUT I THINK ME AND JACK ARE CONNECTED. WE CAN'T ESCAPE EACH OTHER'S STORY. SOMEHOW, I KNOW THIS IS WHERE HE'S GOING TO BE.


THINGS ENDED BADLY FOR ME IN CRIME REALM BECAUSE JACK CIRCUMVENTED THE RULES. MAYBE I WAS FINALLY SUPPOSED TO BRING THE RIPPER TO JUSTICE, BUT OUR BOOK REMAINED UNFINISHED.
I'M BEGINNING TO THINK THERE WAS SUPPOSED TO BE MORE TO MY STORY.

UHM. I MAY NOT BE THE SMART ONE BUT ARE YOU SURE THIS IS A GOOD IDEA, FRANKIE?

WELL, LET ME PUT IT THIS WAY, SIMON: HOW STUPID WOULD YOU HAVE TO BE TO DESCEND INTO THE DEEPEST HOLE IN THE WORLD TOWARDS A BUNCH OF BAD GUYS AND A DATE WITH CERTAIN DEATH?
UHM. PRETTY STUPID, I'D THINK.

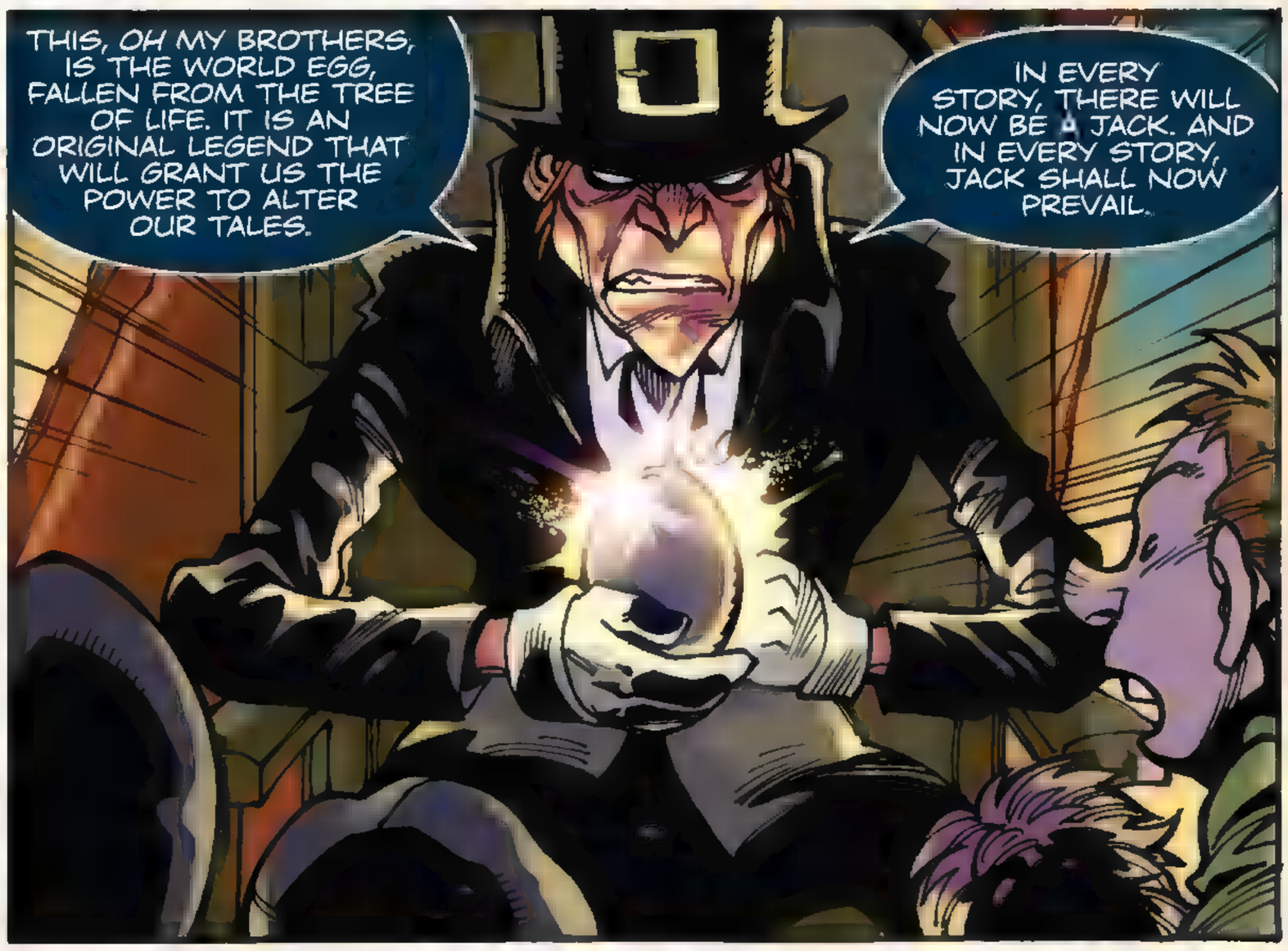
AND YOU'RE THE WORLD'S DUMBEST PERSON, RIGHT?
I AM SO STUPID IT'S LEGENDARY.

THERE YOU GO. PROVED MY POINT.

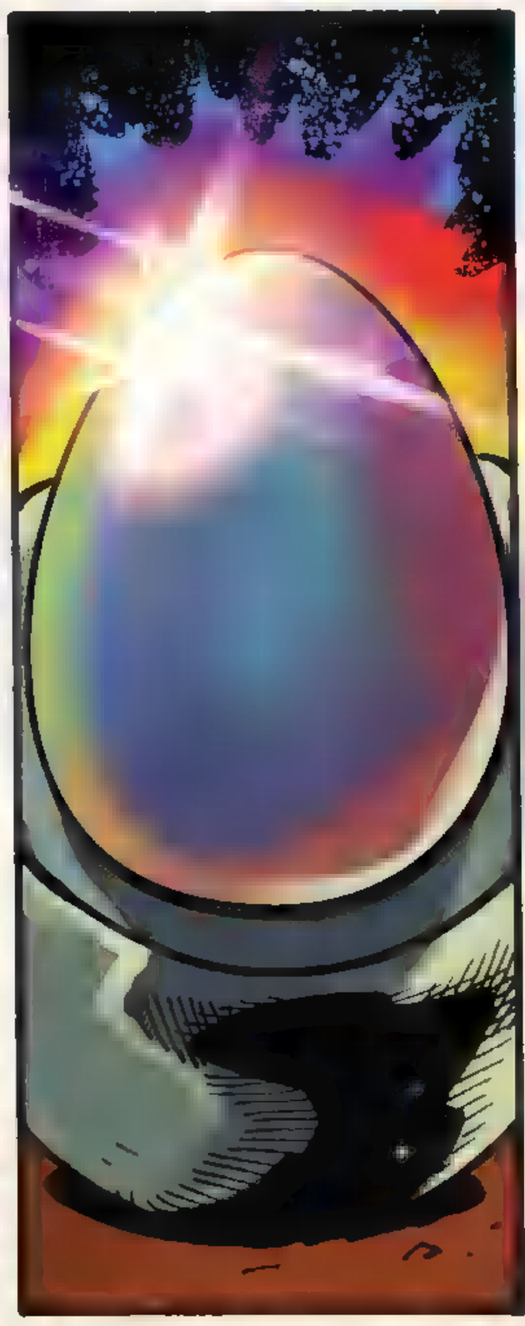
THERE MUST BE MILLIONS OF THEM. OUR GUY'S OVER ACROSS THE FAR SIDE OF THAT BRIDGE, SEE?
THAT'S A BIG TREE.

OH MY BROTHERS! FOR TOO LONG HAVE WE TOILED IN OBSCURITY, ALWAYS COWING TO THE WOMEN, BELIEVING THEM TO BE AT THE CENTER OF THE MOST WORTHY TALES!
BUT WE ARE LEGION! WITHOUT THE JACKS, THERE WOULD BE NO STORIES! AND SO WE SHALL UNITE AS ONE AND CLAIM OUR RIGHTFUL PLACES AS THE TRUE POWER BROKERS OF FABLEWOOD.

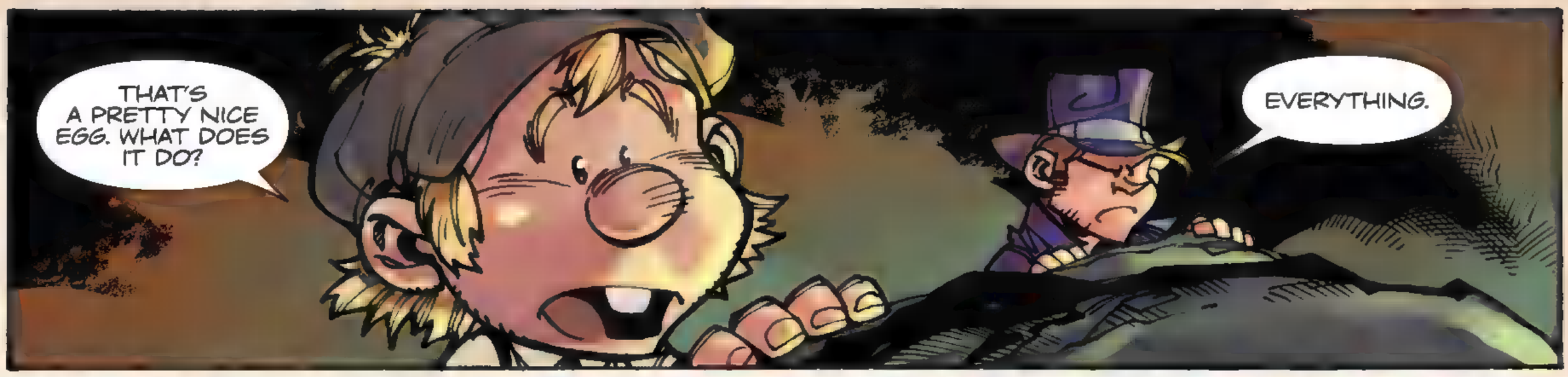
I MIGHT BE DUMBER THAN A PLANK, BUT HE'S MORE THAN TWICE AS HALF-MENTAL AS THE BOTH OF US.
THAT'S THE FIRST SENSIBLE THING YOU'VE SAID ALL DAY--
--BINGO!

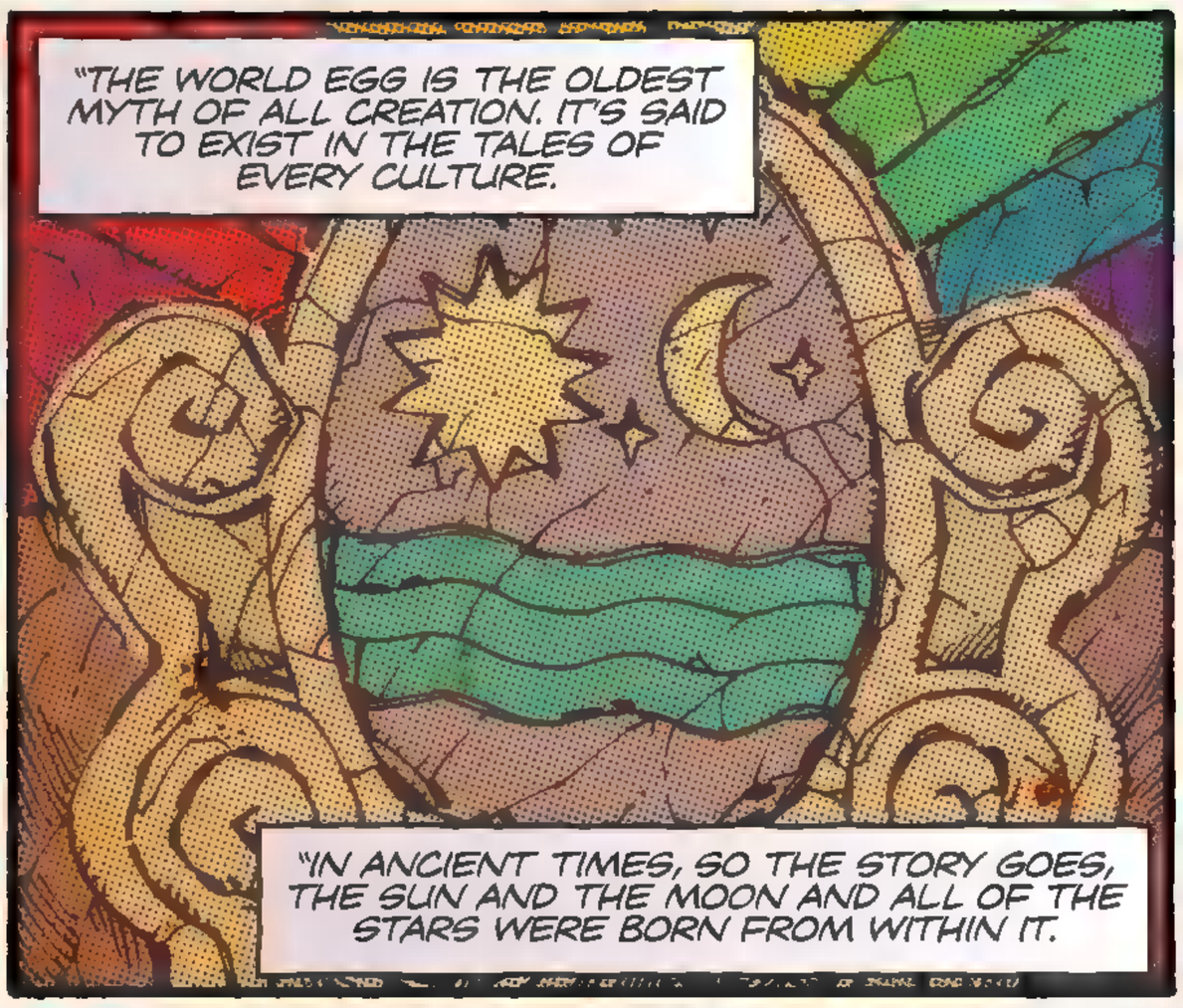

THIS, OH MY BROTHERS, IS THE WORLD EGG, FALLEN FROM THE TREE OF LIFE. IT IS AN ORIGINAL LEGEND THAT WILL GRANT US THE POWER TO ALTER OUR TALES.
IN EVERY STORY, THERE WILL NOW BE A JACK. AND IN EVERY STORY, JACK SHALL NOW PREVAIL.

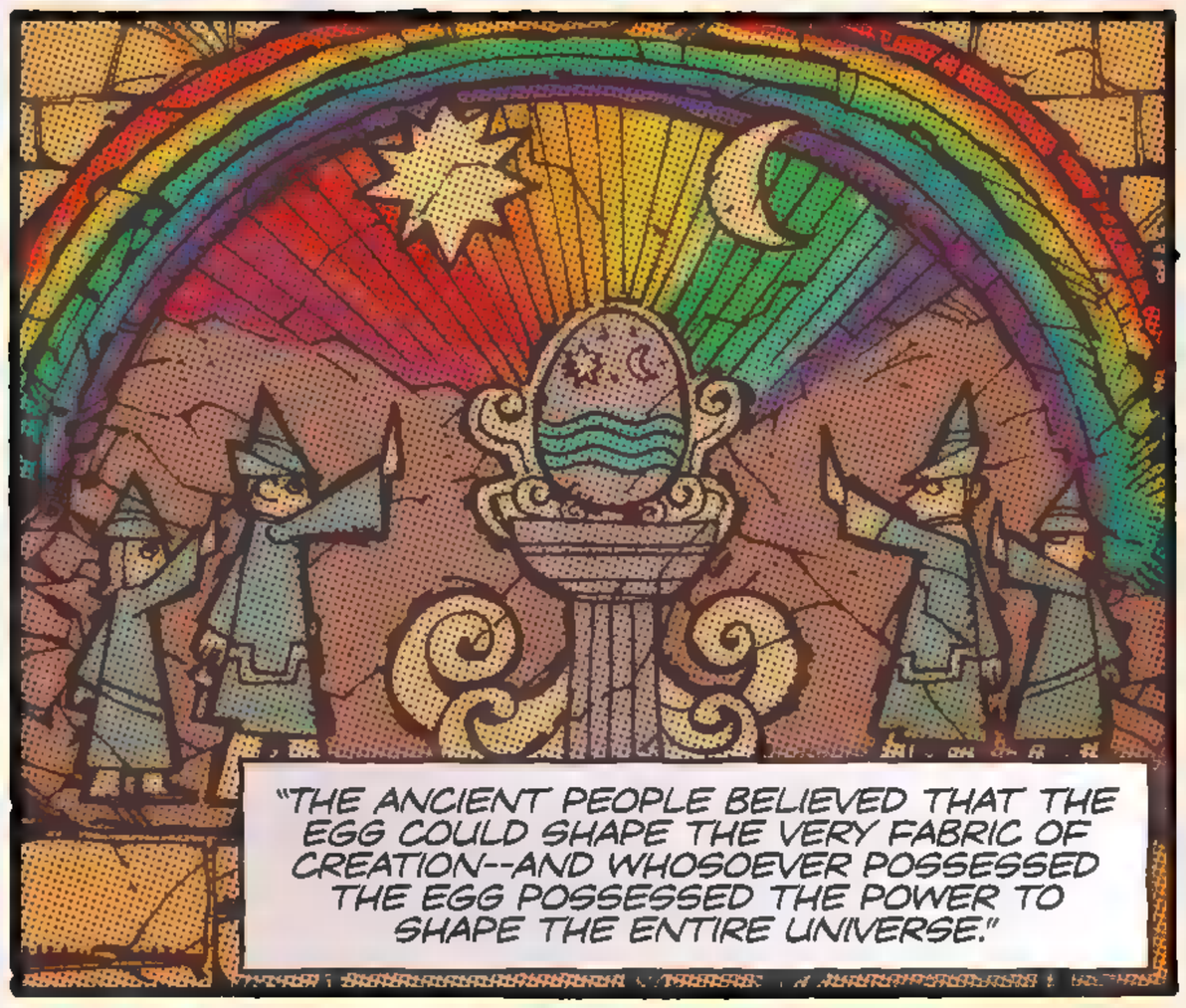
WYAAAAHHHH!



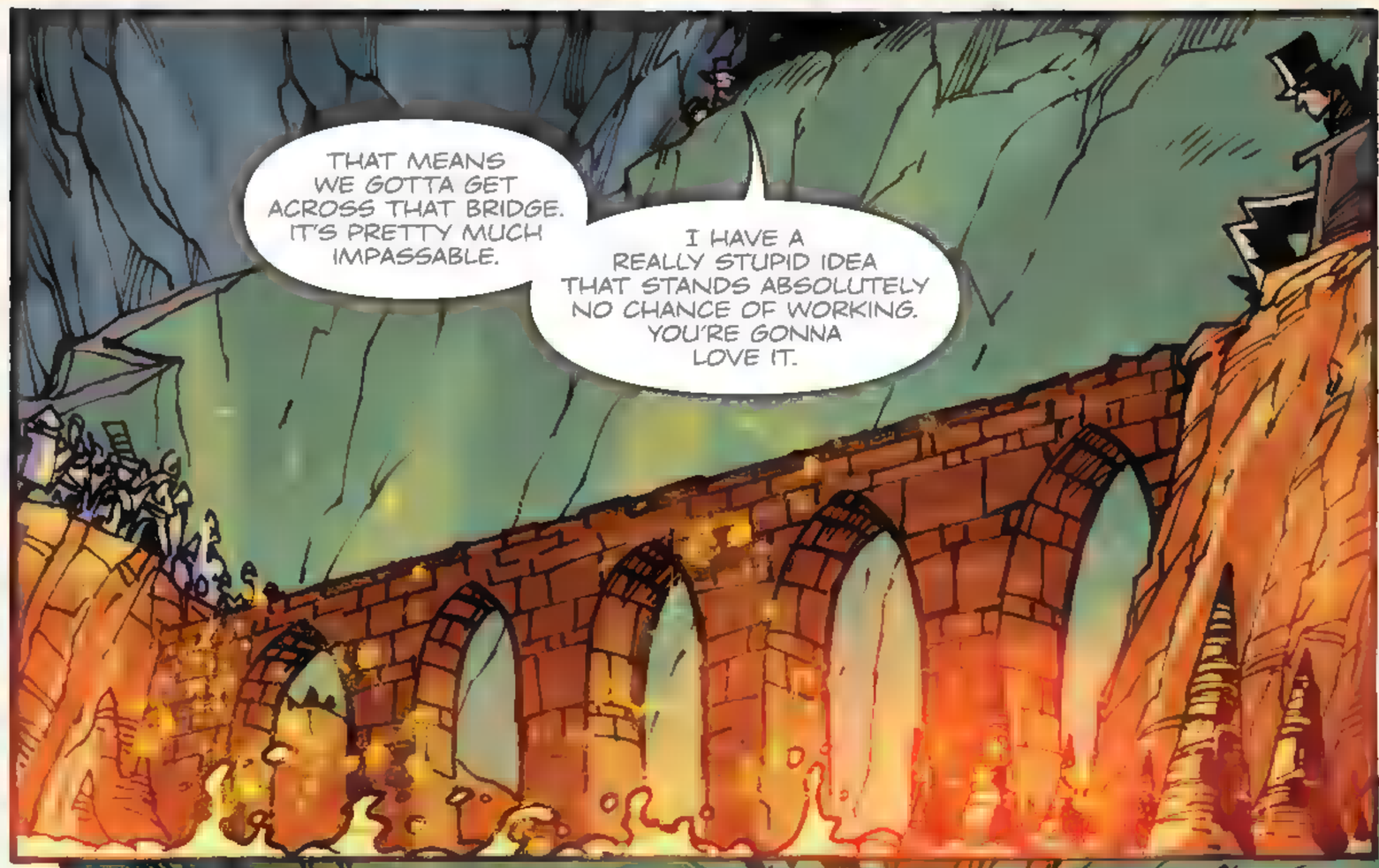
CRAZIER THAN A BANDERSNATCH.
WE'VE GOT TO BRING THIS GUY IN.


THAT'S A PRETTY NICE EGG. WHAT DOES IT DO?
EVERYTHING.


"THE WORLD EGG IS THE OLDEST MYTH OF ALL CREATION. IT'S SAID TO EXIST IN THE TALES OF EVERY CULTURE.
"IN ANCIENT TIMES, SO THE STORY GOES, THE SUN AND THE MOON AND ALL OF THE STARS WERE BORN FROM WITHIN IT.


"THE ANCIENT PEOPLE BELIEVED THAT THE EGG COULD SHAPE THE VERY FABRIC OF CREATION--AND WHOSOEVER POSSESSED THE EGG POSSESSED THE POWER TO SHAPE THE ENTIRE UNIVERSE."

SORRY, FRANKIE. YOU LOST ME AT "EVERYTHING"--
THAT'S OKAY, PAL. THE POINT IS WE HAVE TO GET IT BACK.


THAT MEANS WE GOTTA GET ACROSS THAT BRIDGE. IT'S PRETTY MUCH IMPASSABLE.
I HAVE A REALLY STUPID IDEA THAT STANDS ABSOLUTELY NO CHANCE OF WORKING. YOU'RE GONNA LOVE IT.

SIMON, I WANT YOU TO JUST WALK OUT THERE WITHOUT A CARE IN THE WORLD, AS IF YOU'RE TOO MUCH OF AN IMBECILE TO UNDERSTAND JUST HOW MIND-NUMBINGLY DANGEROUS THIS SITUATION REALLY IS.
NO ONE WOULD BELIEVE ANYONE COULD BE DUMB ENOUGH TO TRY A PLAN LIKE THAT. YOU'RE JUST THE MAN FOR THE JOB.
OKAY. WHAT WILL YOU DO?
THIS TIME, I'M GONNA BE YOUR DISTRACTION!

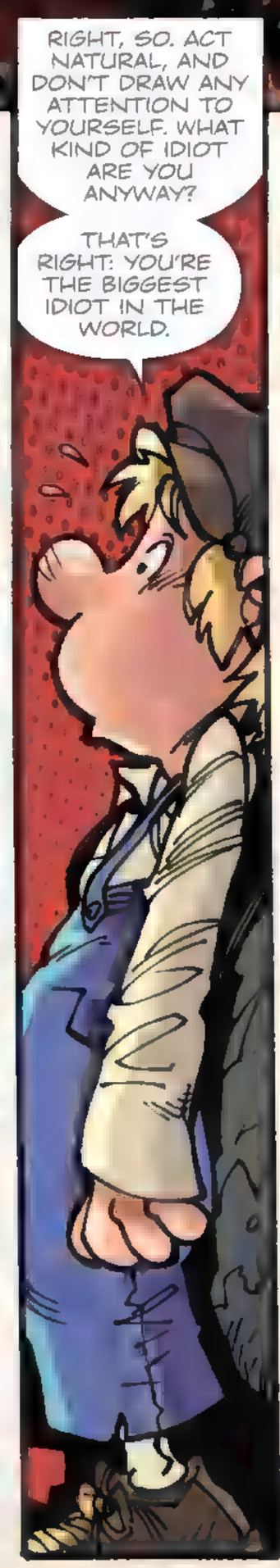
THERE YOU ARE! I'VE BEEN LOOKING FOR YOU GUYS!
HUH--?

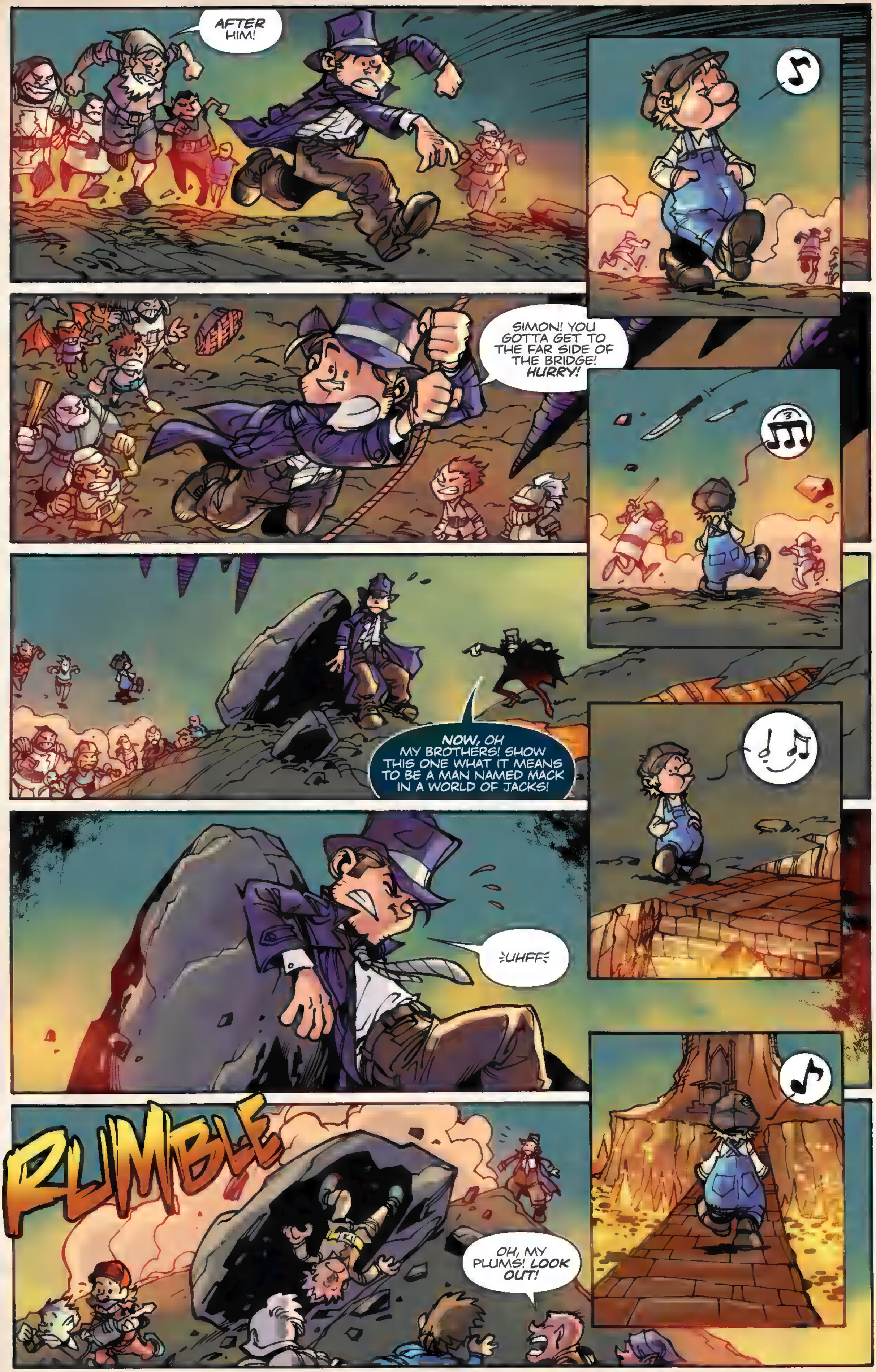
NO. I WILL NOT BELIEVE IT.

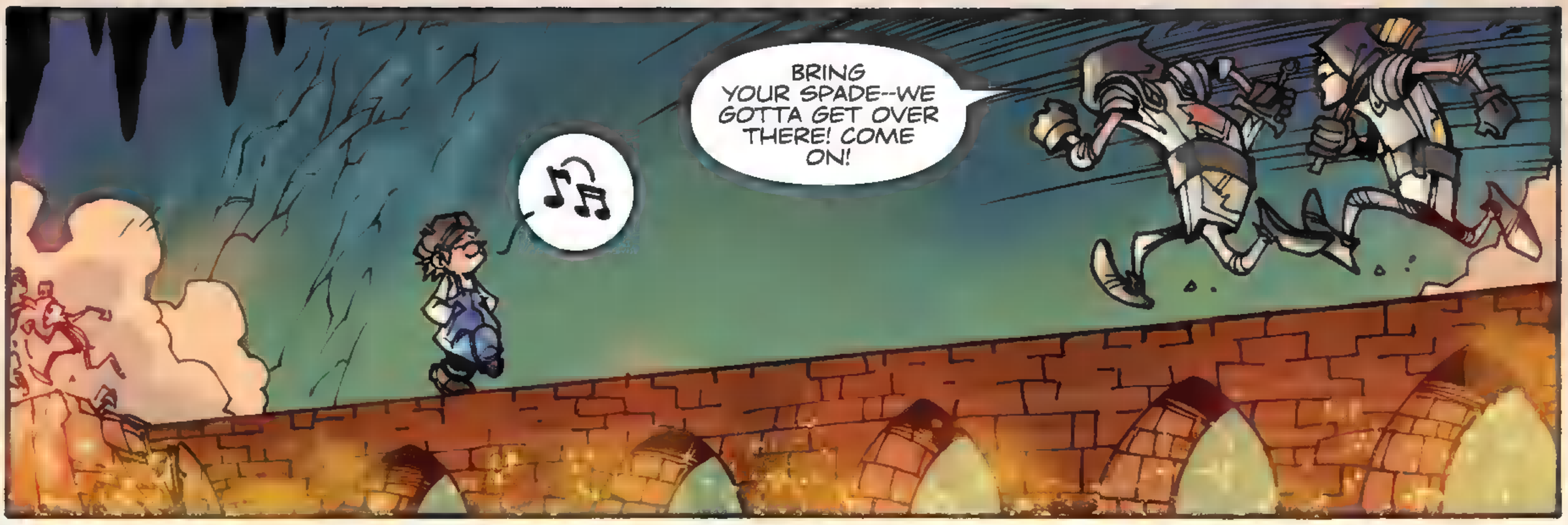
I WILL NOT BELIEVE IT! I WILL NOT ACCEPT IT!
KILL HIM REPEATEDLY!

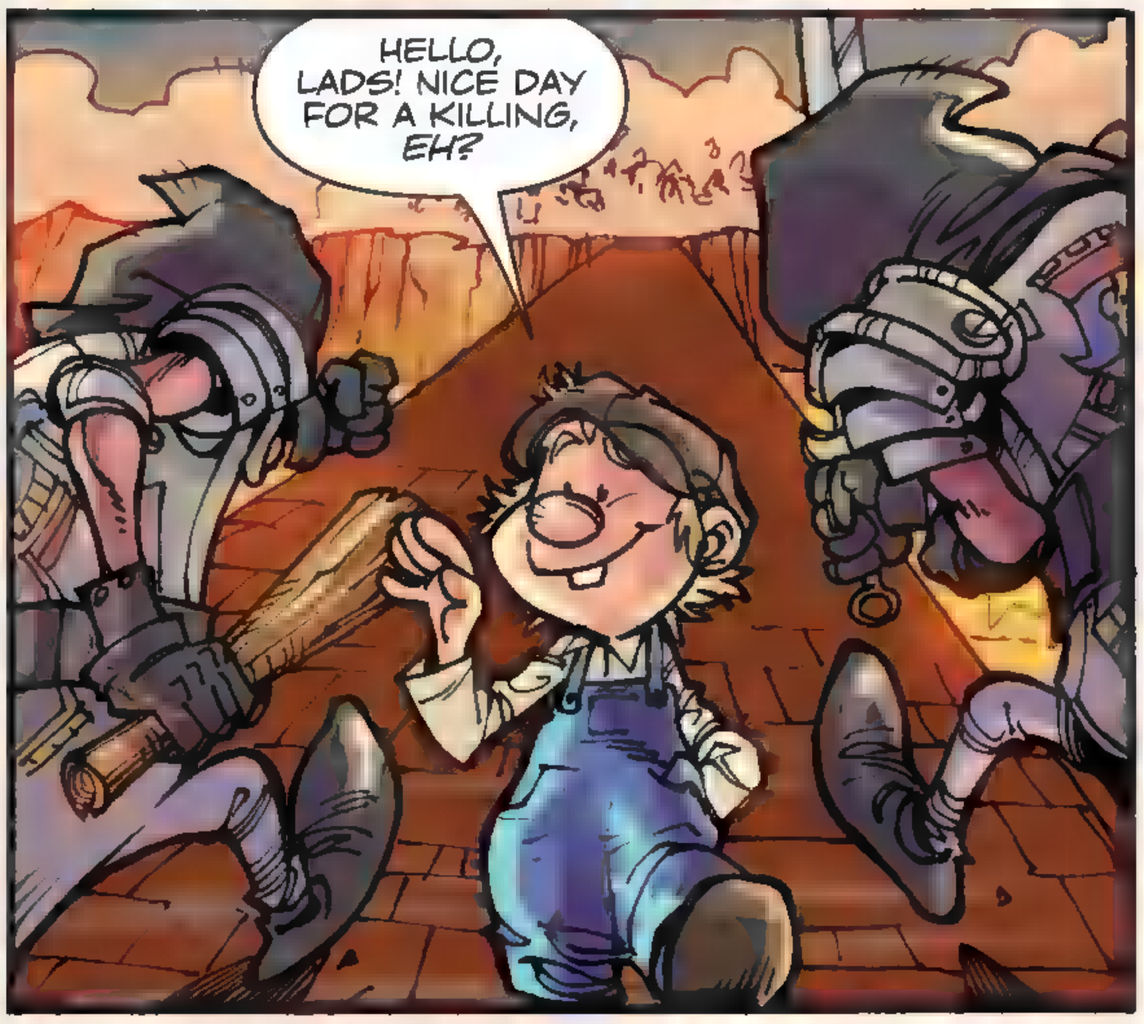
UH-OH--!

KRASH


RIGHT, SO. ACT NATURAL, AND DON'T DRAW ANY ATTENTION TO YOURSELF. WHAT KIND OF IDIOT ARE YOU ANYWAY?
THAT'S RIGHT: YOU'RE THE BIGGEST IDIOT IN THE WORLD.


AFTER HIM!
SIMON! YOU GOTTA GET TO THE FAR SIDE OF THE BRIDGE! HURRY!
NOW, OH MY BROTHERS! SHOW THIS ONE WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A MAN NAMED MACK IN A WORLD OF JACKS!
UHFF
PLUMBLE
OH, MY PLUMS! LOOK OUT!


BRING YOUR SPADE--WE GOTTA GET OVER THERE! COME ON!


HELLO, LADS! NICE DAY FOR A KILLING, EH?

WHO WAS THAT IDIOT?
I DUNNO. MUST BE A NEW GUY.

AA-AHH!

JUST A FEW MOMENTS MORE, DETECTIVE. THIS IS WHERE YOUR STORY ABRUPTLY ENDS.

HEY, FRANKIE!

IS IT THIS ONE?

GIVE THAT TO ME.

FRANKIE, I DIDN'T THINK THIS THROUGH. I'M IN TOO DEEP!
WHAT DO I DO?

USE THE WORLD EGG!
JUST THINK OF SOMETHING! ANYTHING!
MFF

NO, WAIT...
...NOT THIS, YOU IDIOT...

SIMON!

SIMON, GET A GRIP! WISH ME OVER THERE, FOR PETE'S--

--SAKE.
SIMON!

GIVE ME THE EGG--
WAIT... YOU MIGHT BREAK IT.

I'LL BREAK YOU IF *YOU* KEEP THIS UP. NOW HAND IT OVER.
NOPE.

GIVE THE EGG TO ME, AND I WILL SHAPE THE WORLD TO YOUR HEART'S DESIRE. I WILL MAKE YOU A KING AMONGST MEN. I WILL GIVE YOU ALL THAT YOU WANT, AND MORE.
THE KING OF JACKS DEMANDS IT. YOU WOULD BE A FOOL TO REFUSE.

OH. RIGHT, SO.
I REFUSE.

I *RELEASE* EVERY JACK UNDER JACK THE RIPPER'S SPELL.

fzzt
fzzt
fzzt
fzzt
HUH--?

WHAT HAPPENED? WHERE AM I?
I'M OUTTA HERE!

FRANKIE! HE'S GETTING AWAY!

C'MERE, YOU!
NO! STAY AWAY FROM ME!

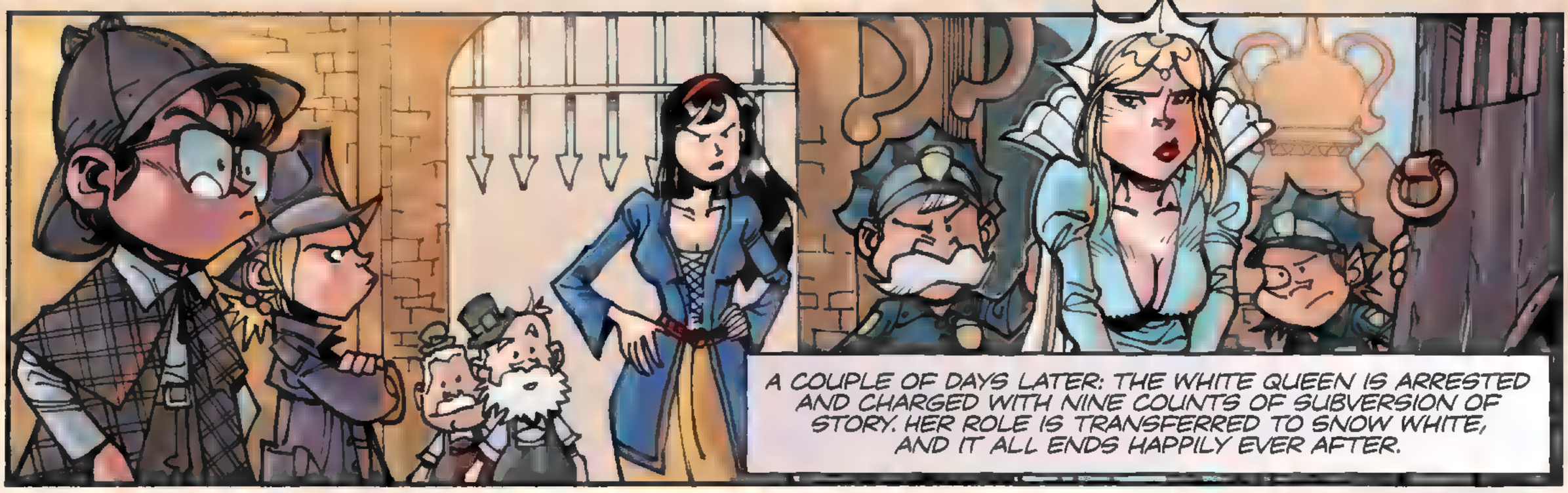
UHFF!

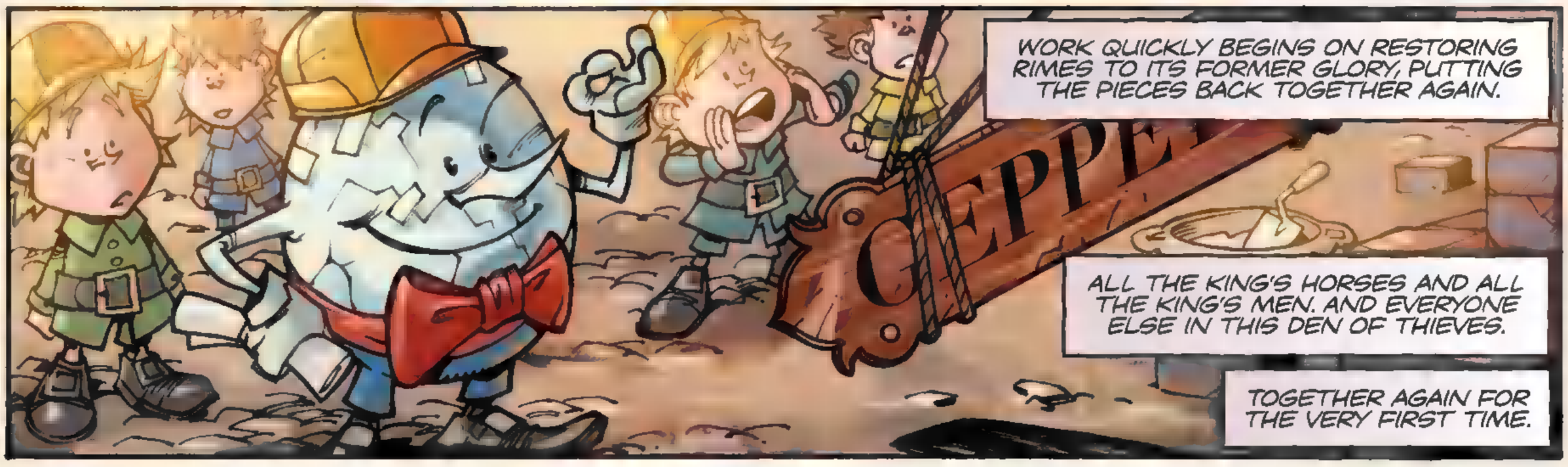
ALL THIS AND MORE, HUH, JACK? ALL THE POWER RIGHT IN THE PALM OF MY HAND--
I CAN TEACH YOU TO USE IT. SPARE ME, AND I WILL BE YOUR SERVANT, AT YOUR SIDE.
TOGETHER, WE WILL RULE FABLEWOOD.

SORRY, PAL. THIS EGG NEEDS TO GO BACK WHERE IT BELONGS--
NO!!

YOU FOOL, MACK! DO YOU KNOW WHAT YOU'VE DONE?
PLOP

SURE I DO.
I'VE REWRITTEN THE END OF MY STORY.


A COUPLE OF DAYS LATER: THE WHITE QUEEN IS ARRESTED AND CHARGED WITH NINE COUNTS OF SUBVERSION OF STORY. HER ROLE IS TRANSFERRED TO SNOW WHITE, AND IT ALL ENDS HAPPILY EVER AFTER.


WORK QUICKLY BEGINS ON RESTORING RIMES TO ITS FORMER GLORY, PUTTING THE PIECES BACK TOGETHER AGAIN.
ALL THE KING'S HORSES AND ALL THE KING'S MEN. AND EVERYONE ELSE IN THIS DEN OF THIEVES.
TOGETHER AGAIN FOR THE VERY FIRST TIME.

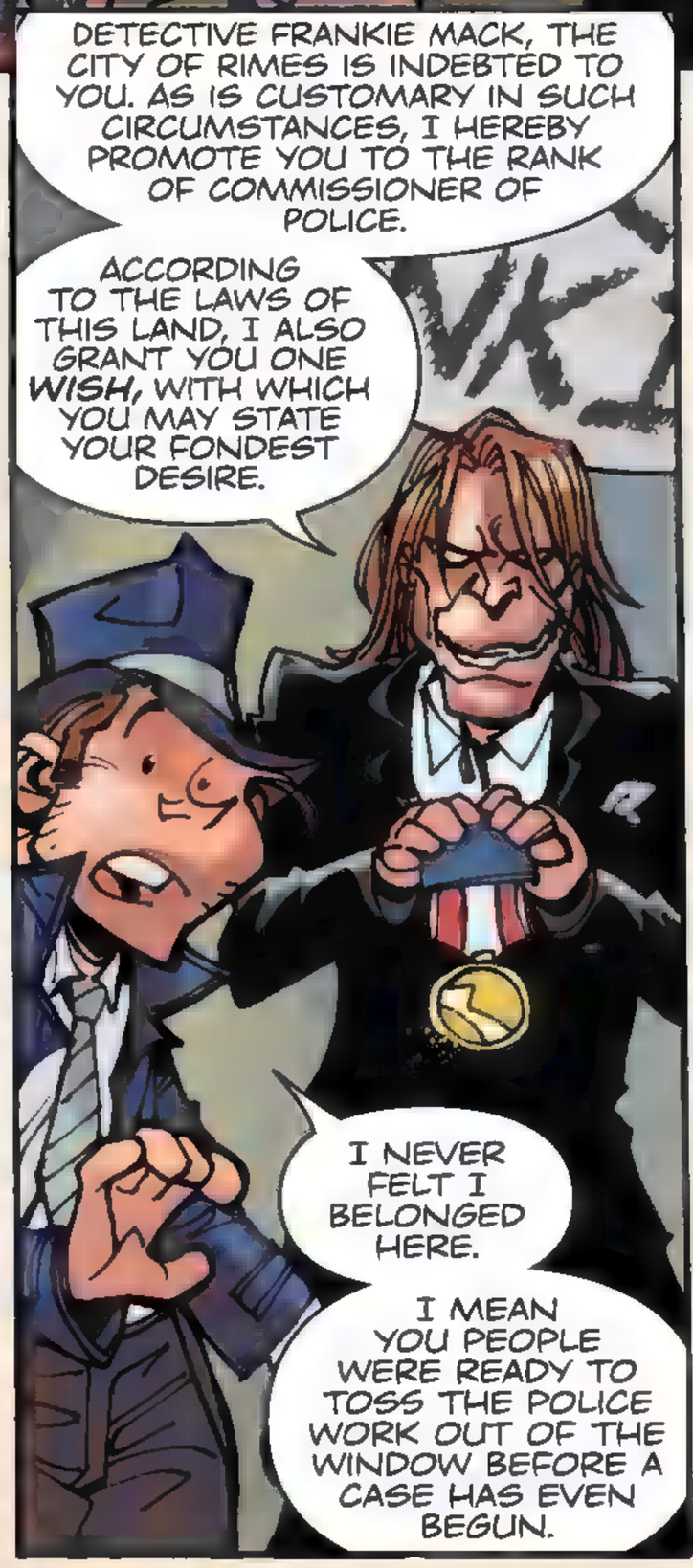
THE MADONNAS AND THE WITCHES SIGN AN HISTORIC ACCORD: A PEACE TREATY DESIGNED TO RESTORE BALANCE AND ORDER TO THE CENTRAL TERRITORIES OF THE CHILDREN'S REALM.
WHICH WILL PROBABLY LAST UNTIL LUNCHTIME ON TUESDAY BEFORE SOMEBODY BREAKS IT.

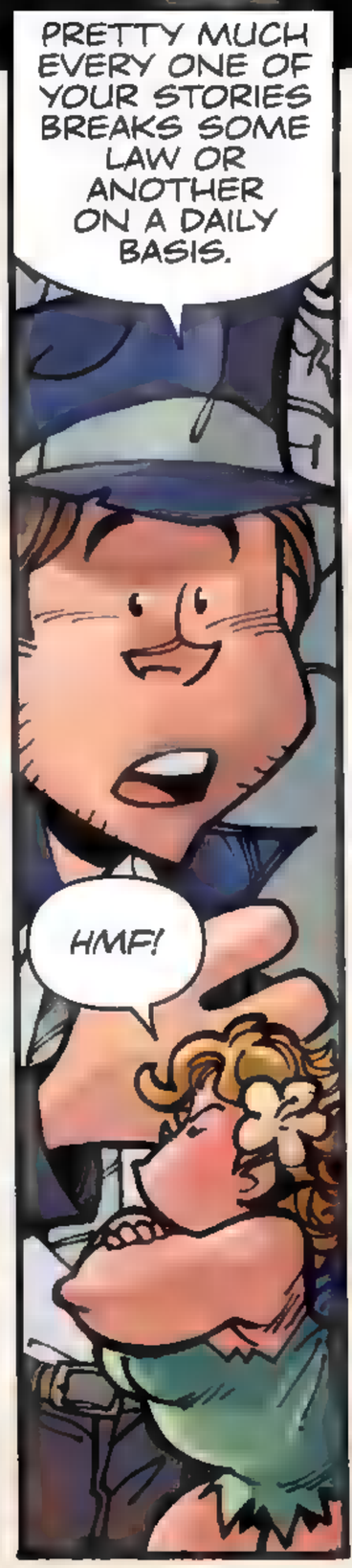
ME? I HAVE THE SATISFACTION OF WATCHING MY OLD NEMESIS SENT BACK ACROSS THE GENRE BORDER TO ANSWER FOR HIS CRIMES.
A MYSTERY MAN NO LONGER. WITHOUT THE EGG, HE'S LIKE ANY OTHER COMMON CRIMINAL.
JUST ANOTHER JACK, FLOUNDERING IN A SEA OF THEM.
ABC

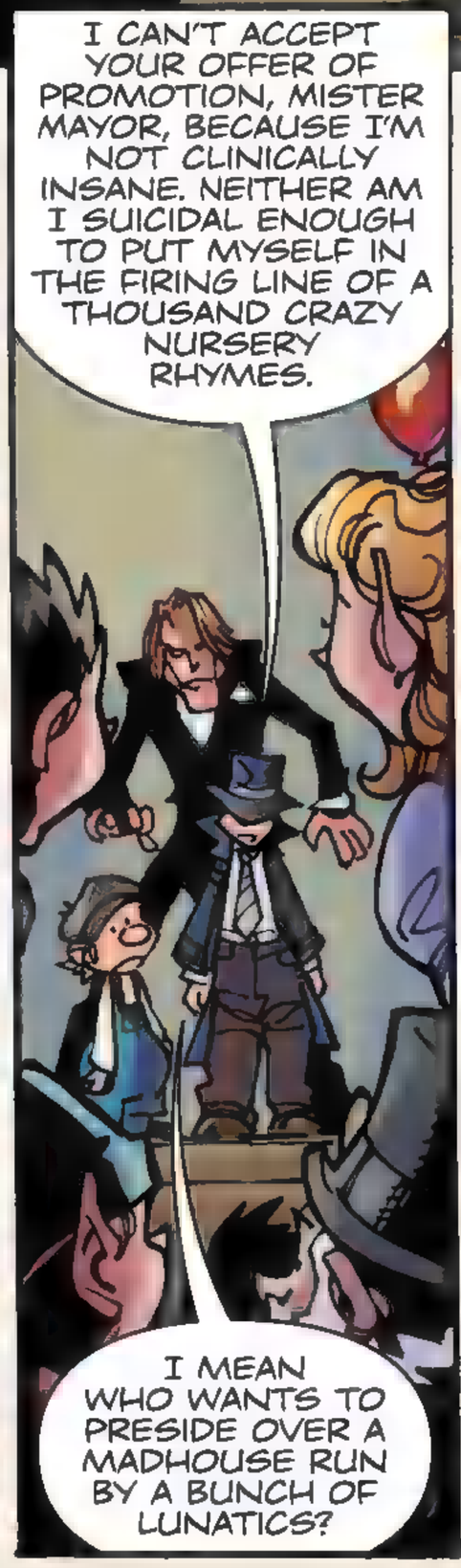
WE DID PRETTY GOOD, HUH, FRANKIE?
YEAH, PAL. WE DID GOOD.
RIMES PRECINCT Nº15
I DIDN'T LIKE THAT JACK FELLER, MIND YOU. HIS EYES WERE TOO CLOSE TOGETHER.

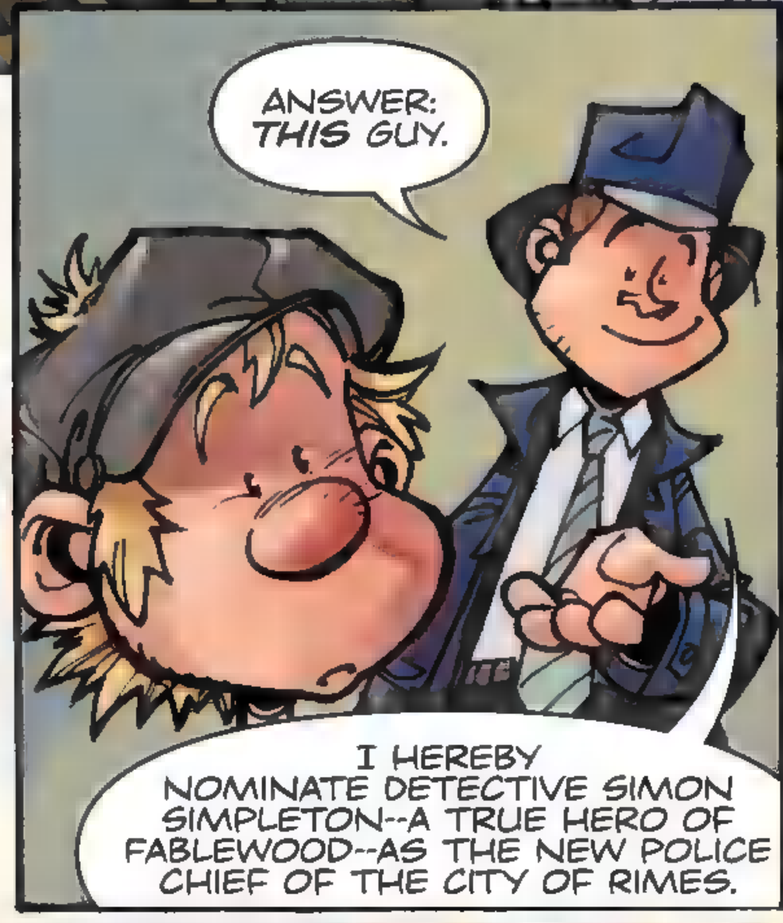
TELL ME ABOUT IT--
--WHAT THE...?

CONGRATULATIONS FRANKIE & SIMON

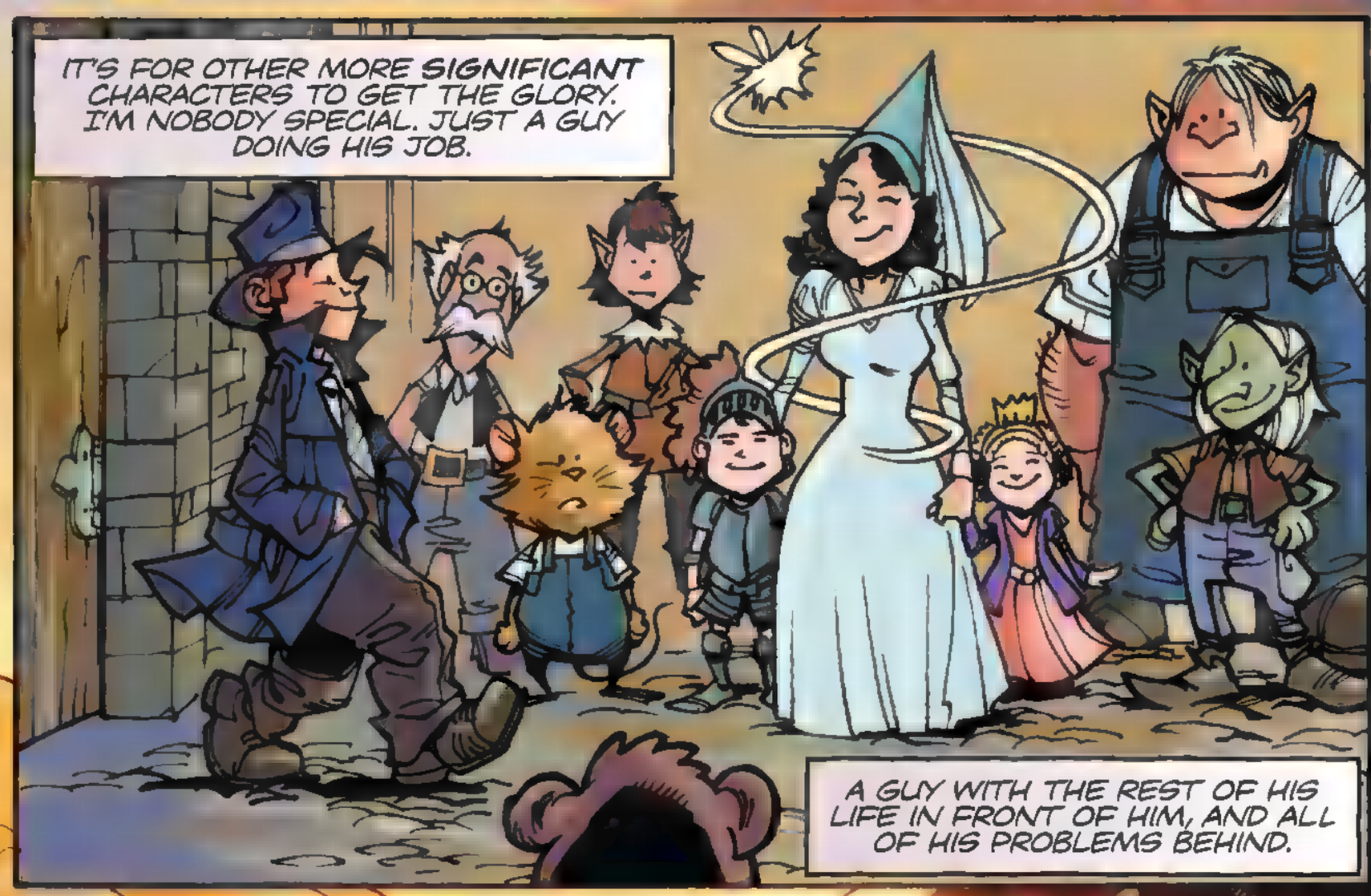

DETECTIVE FRANKIE MACK, THE CITY OF RIMES IS INDEBTED TO YOU. AS IS CUSTOMARY IN SUCH CIRCUMSTANCES, I HEREBY PROMOTE YOU TO THE RANK OF COMMISSIONER OF POLICE.
ACCORDING TO THE LAWS OF THIS LAND, I ALSO GRANT YOU ONE WISH, WITH WHICH YOU MAY STATE YOUR FONDEST DESIRE.
I NEVER FELT I BELONGED HERE.
I MEAN YOU PEOPLE WERE READY TO TOSS THE POLICE WORK OUT OF THE WINDOW BEFORE A CASE HAS EVEN BEGUN.

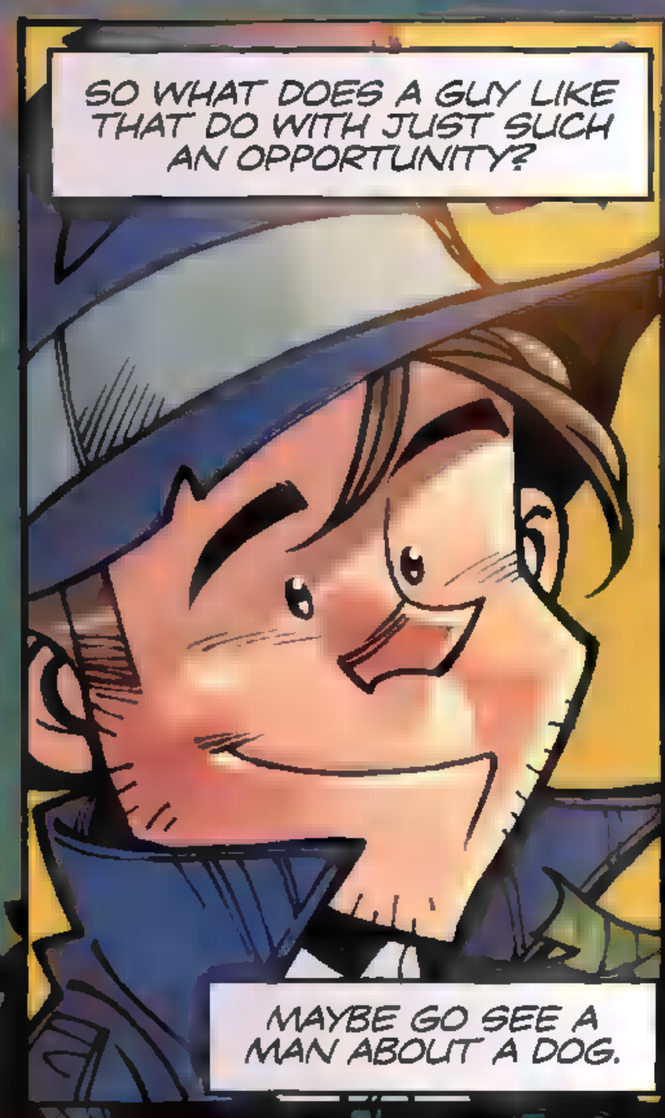

PRETTY MUCH EVERY ONE OF YOUR STORIES BREAKS SOME LAW OR ANOTHER ON A DAILY BASIS.
HMF!


I CAN'T ACCEPT YOUR OFFER OF PROMOTION, MISTER MAYOR, BECAUSE I'M NOT CLINICALLY INSANE. NEITHER AM I SUICIDAL ENOUGH TO PUT MYSELF IN THE FIRING LINE OF A THOUSAND CRAZY NURSERY RHYMES.
I MEAN WHO WANTS TO PRESIDE OVER A MADHOUSE RUN BY A BUNCH OF LUNATICS?


ANSWER: THIS GUY.
I HEREBY NOMINATE DETECTIVE SIMON SIMPLETON--A TRUE HERO OF FABLEWOOD--AS THE NEW POLICE CHIEF OF THE CITY OF RIMES.

THAT IS MY FONDEST WISH.
VERY WELL.





OR A GIRL ABOUT A PICNIC.

-END-

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PEOPLE DON'T

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